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SUCCESS STORY

Cooperative Governance in Kandahar

Community stabilization grants allow sub-district managers to reach out to their communities



Photo: USAID/LGCD

The sub-district manager monitors a project site and meets his constituents in sub-district six of Kandahar Province.

To support efforts on a grassroots level, USAID's Local Governance and Community Development project works with the Afghan Government to establish a process where municipal officials collaborate with communities to plan and implement small, community-driven development activities.

Hamkari de Kandahar Lepara (cooperation for Kandahar) is the Afghan Government's strategy to provide the people of Kandahar with security, representative governance, and social service delivery through the Afghan Government and the international community. The plan combines improved governance with development and stabilization efforts in Kandahar City, a previous Taliban stronghold that has suffered from a lack of community engagement with the government.

In support of the strategy, USAID works with sub-district managers to identify communities interested in cooperating with the Afghan Government and assists with completing community stabilization grant applications. Seven grant applications have been successfully completed, and 16 additional applications are underway, supporting activities that include repairing canals, dilapidated roads, drainage systems, and culverts. These activities will provide approximately 6,500 man-days of labor, benefit communities directly, and create opportunities for government-community cooperation.

When Sub-District Six Manager Latif visited two villages to monitor progress, he assured the residents, "I am here to meet you, to learn about your needs, and to serve you. But we also want you to work in close cooperation and share your needs with the government."

Initially, sub-district managers expressed little interest in visiting their areas, but now, each visit greatly improves governance capacity and engagement within the city. Most importantly, this frequent interaction builds a positive relationship between the Afghan Government and local communities, while creating a foundation for future collaboration. The grants implemented in two sub-districts are altering a previous pattern in which sub-district managers rarely met communities.

Community members noted, "Employment opportunities for us have increased. Our youth are engaged in development and improvement of our area." As USAID's flagship stabilization effort, the Local Governance and Community Development project engages communities in unstable areas to take an active role in their own security and address priority grievances. The community stabilization grant component provides development activities and opportunities for cooperation with the government.